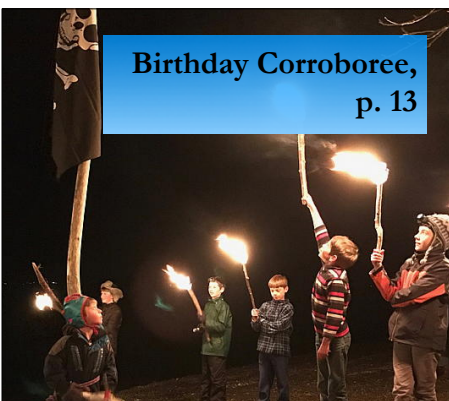
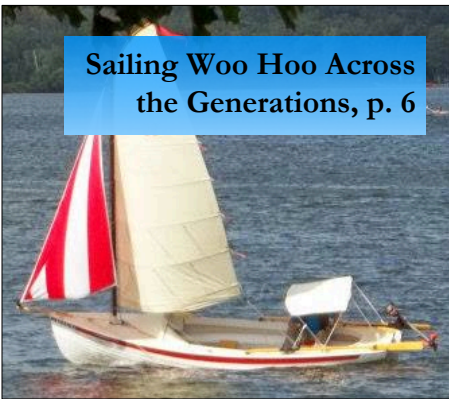




# Signals from TARSUS & North Pole News

June 2017

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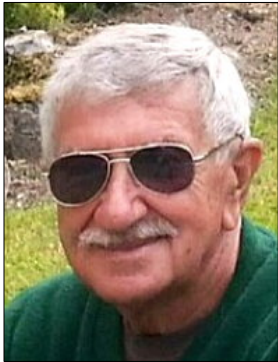
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## Ship's Papers — Important information for the Crew



### A View from the Helm

By Robin Marshall  
TARSUS Coordinator  
210 N 18th Street W Bradenton, FL 34205  
[robin@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:robin@arthur-ransome.org)

Summer for most is a time to get out and enjoy the outdoors. Not many of us can go so far as being a member of the crew on a beautiful sailing vessel like

the one pictured here. She is the *Spirit of South Carolina* and as I write this our chief adventurer and member Doug Faunt is a member of the crew. Doug has crewed on many tall ships including the ill-fated *Bounty* and was on board at the time of her sinking. We were very thankful when we heard of his rescue. Undaunted he has since

crewed on many more voyages on tall ships. I wonder if we have any other members that have crewed. We are all supposed to have a bucket list, would this be on yours?

It appears our chance to see the new *Swallows and Amazons* movie here in North America is coming closer. Ori-

on Pictures and Samuel Goldwyn Films have acquired the North American rights to the film, so look for it at a movie theatre near you, at least that is my hope.

This summer for me looks like a trip to the mountains in North Georgia with my daughter and family. So it will be some sort of adventure and nice to get away from the flatness of Florida and, I hope, the humidity.

Fortunately most 2017 subscriptions have now been paid and I would like to thank all those who made an extra donation to TARS and in particular to TARSUS.

I have listed below those who so far have forgotten to send in their subscriptions in. As I mentioned last year, if you are not on the list you are paid up to date. If, however, your name is listed but you believe you have already paid, please contact me asap.

Have a great and enjoyable summer. We hope to hear from you about your summer adventures in the next issue.

Robin

**Jib Booms and Bobstays! You are standing into danger!**

The TARS Membership Database is purged of non-renewals at the end of May. The following members have not yet renewed:

C Barnett 2156  
D Leab 1879  
R Mikusko 866  
H Penner 2646  
B Wakeman 3831  
K White 3732

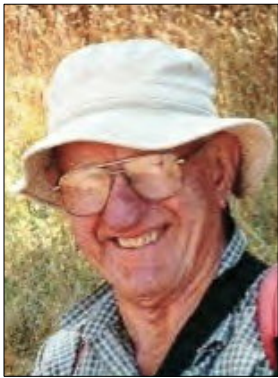
Please send your renewal check quickly or your membership is likely to go to Davey Jones!

Your membership type and amount:  
Junior: \$17.50 – Adult: \$52.50  
Student: \$35.00 – Family: \$67.25  
Senior/Pensioner: \$44.00  
Corporate: \$105.00

To pay, or if you have already paid, contact me by email at [usa@arthur-ransome.org](mailto:usa@arthur-ransome.org), phone at 941-726-1974 or mail at:

Robin Marshall  
210 N 18th St W.  
Bradenton FL 34205





## Greetings from the North

By Ian Sacré, TARS Canada Coordinator  
750 Donegal Place, North Vancouver, BC V7N 2X5  
[gallivanterthree@telus.net](mailto:gallivanterthree@telus.net)

Greetings Canadian TARS Members!

It is pouring with rain this late April afternoon and, rather than getting wet, I am staying in the dry to write

my coordinator's report in response to Simon's request for submissions for *Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News*.

Meeting deadlines with little to write about has made me develop a much greater respect for professional journalists and reporters who must frequently face such brain blocks but who don't have the luxury of being able to ignore the task of providing something interesting by deadline.

I was delighted to note in the most recent issue of the Society's *Signals* the reproductions of two articles which appeared in our *North Pole News*, by TARS Canada members, namely, "Confessions of an Armchair Sailor" by Simon Horn and "Ransome's Winter" by Peter Calamai. In my view, pieces by overseas TARS members such as these makes the national parent magazine much more inclusive and perhaps in some small way lets the UK membership know that there are

other Arthur Ransome enthusiasts on the other side of the world. We may be small in numbers but we are indeed keen!

Sadly, I have to report that our Canadian TARS membership appears to have diminished by two this year. 24 Canadian memberships are all paid up for 2017 but two remain unpaid and I fear they will be taken of the headquarters distribution list in the coming months if nothing is heard from them.

I hope the coming summer provides everyone with many opportunities for adventuring in the best Swallows and Amazons style and a chance to make your own pemmican!

Wishing everyone fair winds and calm seas.

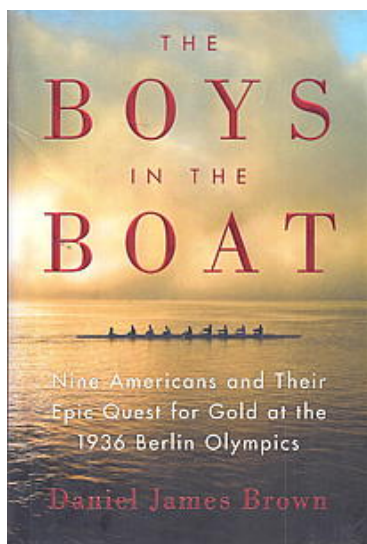
Ian Sacré

## Ship's Library — Books we've read and want to share

### More Nautical Reading

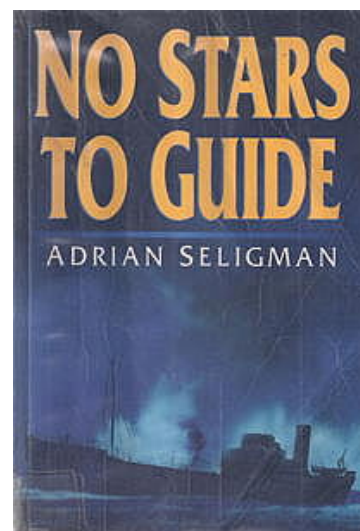
Reviewed by Ian Sacré

For most people I suspect the past



cold and wet winter months provided an opportunity to catch up on some reading. I read four books which perhaps may be of interest to others. Not too Arthur Ransomeish, perhaps, but they nevertheless had very much a nautical theme.

The first is *The Boys in the Boat* by Daniel James Brown. It is the true story of nine American working class boys from small towns in Washington State who came from behind and won the 1936 Olympic rowing gold medal in Germany. Interestingly, the eight-man shell they used was built by George Pocock, an Englishman who learnt his craft from his father, who

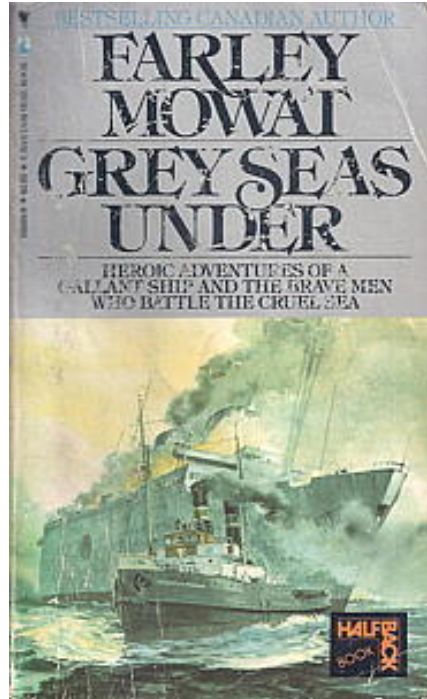


built racing shells for the Eton and Oxford and Cambridge rowing teams. Pocock himself was a famous

rower who also imparted his knowledge and philosophy to the team. Perhaps his most important piece of advice being, “Keep your mind in the boat!”

Another book I enjoyed was *No Stars to Guide* by Adrian Seligman. It too is a true story, of three young Royal Naval Reserve officers who were sent in December 1941 to Istanbul, Turkey. Their task was to join three Russian vessels escaping from the German threat to the Black Sea ports and to guide them to allied-held harbours. Turkey, of course, was neutral and the plan called for the ships to attempt to stay within the territorial waters of Turkey, close to the rock bound coast, while they tried to avoid German patrols. Not a simple task, since Germany had occupied the Greek Islands bordering on Turkey. One of the ships was torpedoed, but Adrian Seligman's ship made it to Syria.

I was also given a copy of *Grey Seas Under* by Farley Mowat. Another true account, this time about the Canadian ocean salvage vessel *Foundation Franklin*. Written in 1958, the book has been around for a long time but I still found it to be a fascinating story. The *Franklin* and her mostly Newfoundland crews saw almost twenty years of service, in both in peace and war, with Foundation Maritime salvage company, and the book provides an in-depth and interesting picture of the countless ships and lives it saved. Built in 1918 for the Royal Navy and then called HMS *Frisky*, the *Franklin*



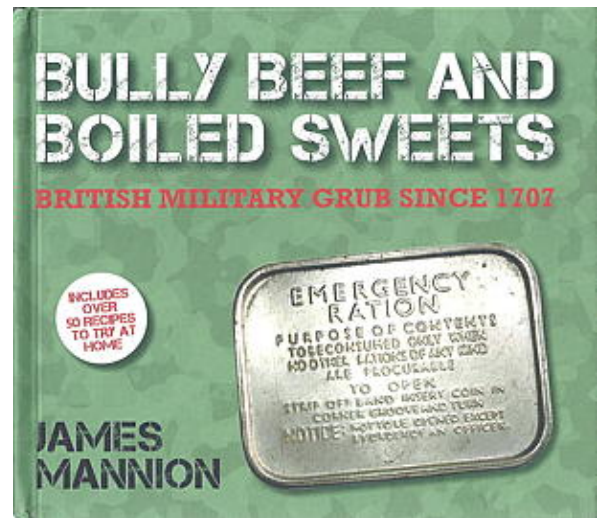
was acquired by Foundation Maritime in 1930 and spent her whole life with the company salvaging and towing ships to safety from all over the North Atlantic. The *Franklin* was very much an unsung hero of the Battle of the Atlantic, as she rescued dozens of ships wrecked or battered by weather and enemy action.

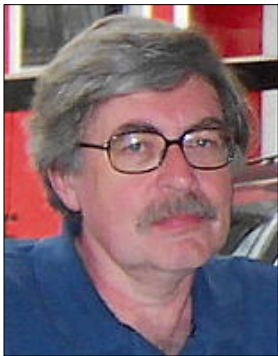
Finally I acquired a rather amusing book called *Bully Beef and Boiled Sweets* by James Mannion, which is a description of British military grub from 1707 to the present day. The book describes various

ways of serving that expedition staple, bully beef and other delicacies, including Spam. Arthur Ransome's Susan would have been delighted with the book. A number of little known anecdotes are included. For instance, did you know that Field Marshal Montgomery's favourite food was rice pudding? That he only drank water, had to hear the nine o'clock news and be in bed by ten, and that he washed his own shirts in the field? I mean this is important stuff! Then there is a short note regarding Prince Harry's cravings while serving in Afghanistan. He would have given anything for bangers and mash with lots of gravy.

In case you really can't find sausages when you are roughing it, the book even gives you the recipe to make your own skinless bangers. What more do we want?

Unless of course you need to know how to skin a snake before cooking it; the book tells you how to do that as well!





## A Note from the Editor

By Simon Horn, [sjhorn@gmail.com](mailto:sjhorn@gmail.com)

Welcome to *Signals from TARSUS/North Pole News* for June 2017.

Not quite as many pages this time, but plenty of interesting articles. My thanks to all the contributors.

**Steve Crouch** describes sailing his Norseboat 17.5, *Woo Hoo*, with long-time family friend, 14-year-old Seth Carter, and Seth follows with his own story of sailing with Steve on Gull Lake in Minnesota.

**Nikki McClure** sent in two items following my mid-May cry for help.

The first talks about her son Finn and his boat *Ichi*, along with preparations for this September's annual Port Townshend Wooden Boat Festival. Please note that Nikki designed the Festival poster, which appears in the article and looks suspiciously like the photo of *Ichi* under way.

Nikki's second contribution appears in *Pieces of Eight* and is a report on a recent Arthur Ransome Birthday Corroborree which saw treasure hunting, eating, of course, and the necessary human sacrifice.

**Ian Sacré**, in "Swallows, Amazons and Pemmican", explains what pemmican really was and how corned beef was the British Navy equivalent. He also convinces me that making my own pemmican is probably not a good idea. Ian's interest in the high fat, high calorie food is probably related to *Bully Beef and Boiled Sweets*, one of books he reviews in "More Nautical Reading".

In "My Children and Arthur Ransome" I consider how some children

take to his books while others do not, using the example of my own kids.

The *Pieces of Eight* section is a bit longer this time, since along with Nikki's report, I present the LitWits kit for *Swallows and Amazons*. LitWits is a small California company that produces PDF-based activity kits for schools and home-schoolers based on classic children's literature. I take a look at their kit for S&A.

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I really should not complain. Though it came at the last minute, I did receive enough material for this issue. Nonetheless, as I said the last time, if you have any ideas for the next issue, please start working on it **now**. Suggestions and photographs are also welcome.

I will be spending a week in Halifax next month, so I am expecting the salt air to encourage me to write something.

Also, as Robin mentions in his "View from the Helm", with luck the new *Swallows and Amazons* film will have arrived on our movie screens so we can all join in the debate over it. If you get to see it, send in your impressions.

Look for the next issue in September or October.

TARS member Helen Jolley wants us to know that she and her partner are off on a one-year adventure. I think I see some *Kanchenjunga's Cairn* reports on the horizon. — Ed.

## Tent For Two: Mike & Helen Go World Wild



In five weeks my partner, Mike, and I will begin our "Year of Adventure". We're quitting our jobs to spend a full year exploring the outdoors and traveling around the world. I grew up not only reading, but immersing myself in the S&A books. John inspired me to take up sailing lessons at summer camp. Titty showed me how to let my imagination run wild. Captain Nancy was with me when I took on outdoor leadership roles. Now I'm ready to begin the next great outdoors adventure!

We can't wait to share our journey with you! Follow us on social media for photos and stories from all of our adventures!

Instagram: [@TentForTwo](https://www.instagram.com/TentForTwo)

Facebook: [@TentForTwo](https://www.facebook.com/TentForTwo)

Blog: <http://tentfortwoblog.wordpress.com>

## Kanchenjunga's Cairn — Places we've been and our adventures

### Sailing Woo Hoo Across the Generations

By Steve Crouch

“Woo Hoo!” The cry went up as we passed between the buoys marking the entrance to Wilson Bay, but it was not yet time to celebrate. “Tack now!” I shouted and Seth, at the helm, brought her smoothly about. Again, the cry of “Woo Hoo”, not “Swallows and Amazons Forever”, was heard across the waters of Gull Lake.

I have been plying the waters of Gull Lake, near Brainerd in Central Minnesota, for 35 years and my young friend, Seth Carter, has been coming with his parents for most of his 14 years. This year, however, it was different, because Seth was with me without his parents and younger sister. It was his first trip solo to central Minnesota, and this was our first sail of the trip. The winds were gloriously 10-12 miles per hour out of the SSE, a typical wind direction for Gull Lake, and we had enjoyed a lovely sail to the entrance to Wilson Bay. Most of that time Seth was at the helm.

Sailing has long been a passion of mine, and learning to sail has become one of Seth's. It started with Seth and his father acting as my crew on my Johnson 16 Daysailer, a fast sailing dinghy I owned for several years prior to my purchase of my current Norseboat 17.5. Seth named the Johnson Daysailer *Rainbow* because of her multicolored sails, and we enjoyed many wonderful days of sailing on *Rainbow*. Seth was young when he started accompanying us on *Rainbow*, and when she would heel over in a gust, he became anxious, so his father and I began yelling “Woo Hoo!” whenever a



gust made us scramble. This seemed to help him feel less frightened and more excited. It seemed natural and appropriate, when I bought the Norseboat, that she would be named *Woo Hoo*.

Over the years that Seth and I have sailed together, we have read the Swal-

lows and Amazons series together. Reading aloud before bed has been our cherished routine for many years. The Norseboat 17.5 is a different boat from any others I have sailed. She is light weight so she can be easily rowed as well as sailed. Her rig is set far forward, essentially a catboat rig with a roller furling jib on a bowsprit. The mainsail is a unique design with a curved gaff. She presents a very distinctive figure, like none other, sailing on Gull Lake. Heads turn and compliments on her appearance are shouted as she passes. However, it has taken us several years of sailing to understand her quirks, most significant of which is the trick of tacking. Because of her light weight, she is prone to losing momentum as we move through 90 degrees into the wind when we come about.

The entrance to Wilson Bay on Gull Lake is a narrow passage between two points with shallows all around. Mo-



Steve and Seth reading *Winter Holiday*



tor boats have to pass through either slowly or at near full throttle, on a plane, or their motor will run aground. In addition, the wind, if coming from the south, always strengthens and

moves around so that one is sailing directly into the wind. This makes the entrance difficult under sail in a boat that does not have great windward ability. So, as we sailed between the

buoys on a starboard tack, heading directly toward the shallow waters full of tall reeds, I had some concern that the tack to starboard, which we needed to make to complete the maneuver and avoid running aground, might be tricky. Seth performed this feat beautifully and we were off, on a port tack, into Wilson Bay, yelling “Woo Hoo!” at the top of our lungs.

The return sail, on a run, was fast and exhilarating, since *Woo Hoo* is a champion downwind boat. Seth relates the remainder of our sail in his version of the day. Without a doubt, this was the best sail of the summer, and I was fortunate to share it with my friend, Seth. When he returned home, Seth wrote about our sail for his class in school. What follows is his account of the day.

## “The Sail”

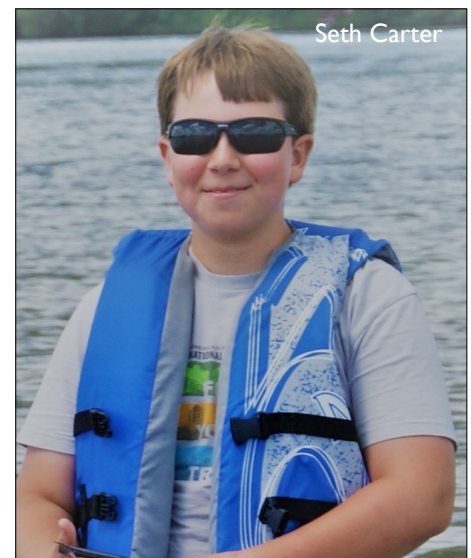
A Personal Memoir by Seth Carter

We were on the water again. I was sitting on the starboard side of the boat waiting for Dr. Steve’s order to lower the centerboard. The boat moved slowly as we backed out from the dock. Once we got about 10 feet from the dock I lowered the centerboard and Steve motored us forward while making a sharp turn. Steve once told me that the centerboard makes controlling the boat easier, the centerboard acts as a pivot when turning and when the boat goes forward it keeps the boat from being pushed sideways by the wind. When we were far enough out from shore I was told to raise the main sail. This had been the first time I had sailed in a year and I had to think hard to remember what color rope did what. From left to right I saw red, white, blue, green, yellow

and a small red one. Each rope was in its cleat, securely fastened. I remembered that I would have to pull two ropes to raise the mainsail, one for the sail and one for the gaff. I looked up the mast and concluded that the red and white ropes would need to be pulled. The sail went up. I “un-cleated” the small red rope and the jib unfurled. Soon we were scooting along the lake at a good speed.

We had a ESE wind, which was perfect for Gull Lake since it mostly runs north to south. Steve was at the tiller but it wasn’t long before Steve asked if I wanted to take the tiller. I gladly said yes and started to control the direction of the boat.

Now, when sailing a boat there are three main things you have to think



about, the direction of the boat, the angle of the mainsail and the angle of the jib or small sail. I have controlled the direction of the boat many times so I picked a point on the shore line to sail towards. I was at the tiller and

Steve had the mainsheet to control the angle of the mainsail. Then Steve let me take the mainsheet and the tiller. I have taken sailing lessons at Gull Lake before and have sailed a small boat by myself. Steve has also taught me how to angle the sail according to the wind so I knew how to do it, but I had never done it on his boat. Now I really felt like I was sailing his boat! I was thoroughly enjoying myself. The cool breeze was coming off the water, the sun would periodically hide itself behind the sail or a cloud and my face would get cool. Then the sun would appear again and the warmth would return. Every now and again a loon would pop out of the water and then dive back under when we got close.

We had been sailing for a while when Steve let me experiment with the jib. Now I was in full control of the boat. I navigated us to a part of the lake known to us as being really hard to sail into, Wilson Bay. Fortunately the wind was in our favor and we sailed into the bay with ease. We were optimistic and decided we would try to sail around an island in Wilson Bay. I tried to get us around it with a series of tacks but was unsuccessful in getting us around the island. Then Steve took control of the boat and was success-



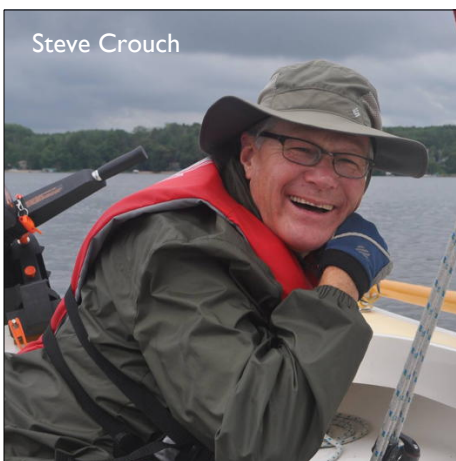
ful. After we got around the island I took control of the boat again and with the wind behind us we zoomed out of Wilson Bay and then turned in the direction of Steamboat Bay.

Steamboat Bay is even harder to get into. It has a narrow channel that zig-zags its way to the bay. The wind had picked up a lot by now and we were having a great time fighting the wind. Once, the wind won and we took on a bit of water but we were heeling over so much that if we leaned forward we would take on some more water. When the wind died down, Steve bailed water out with a scoop while I sailed. We almost got all the water out when Steve accidentally threw the bailer into the water. We took the opportunity to practice our “man overboard drill.” I turned the boat 180 degrees and we retrieved the bailer. After retrieving the bailer we had to make up the distance we lost. After much difficulty we made it into the bay.

Steamboat Bay is a small bay but its shorelines are filled with high-end expensive resorts. Almost every kind of

boat you could think of was in the bay. Kayaks, canoes, stand-up paddle boards, speedboats, pontoon boats, fishing boats, paddle boats, and of course, our little sailboat.

On our way home Steve and I decided that this was the best sail we had ever had together.



Steve Crouch



Isaac, Steve's grandson and future Ransome fan



## Dipping our Hands — Personal relationships with the books

### My Children and Arthur Ransome

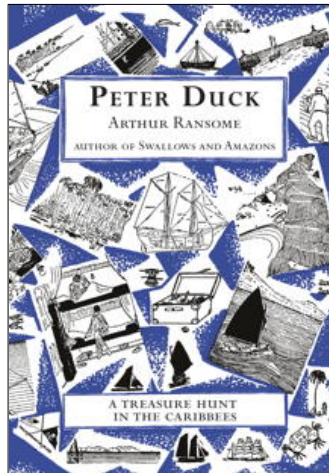
By Simon Horn

I have two sons, born seven years apart. When they were young we read to them consistently at bedtime, every night. I don't remember reading to the two of them together, or at the same time — probably because of the age difference — though that must have happened. Nor do I remember everything we read together. Whatever the case, as adults they are both voracious readers of both fiction and non-fiction, and that is something I am proud of.

My father read to me as a child, and I tended to read to my children books that I had loved. When they were very young we read them *Winnie the Pooh*. My younger one so liked it that, long after we had moved on from Pooh, every night after I had finished whatever we were reading at the time, he would then play a wonderful audio-book of Pooh recorded by Lionel Jeffries. This went on every night for what seemed to be years.

Some things, like Pooh, I remember reading to both of them, at different times, of course. We read them both all the Narnia stories, for example. We read *The Hobbit*. But what about Arthur Ransome?

It seems to me that one of the keys to parenting is understanding that you are dealing with separate and different human beings. No matter how much you would like your children to like the things you like, it is not necessarily going to happen. Books are very personal. Whether or not you like a book depends on your situation when you



first come across it: what have you read before, what are your enthusiasms and your concerns. Any given book at any given time may simply not “take”. This of course is true of all of us, not just children.

For whatever reason, for my older boy the Arthur Ransome books just did not take. We tried *Swallows and Amazons* — I don't recall if we finished it — and then stopped, and moved on to other things. With my younger son, on the other hand, we enthusiastically went through the whole series... almost. We never got to *The Picts and the Martyrs*. He knew what the story was, and he didn't like the Great Aunt. Possibly he was simply getting old enough that Ransome no longer clicked in the same way it had when we'd started.

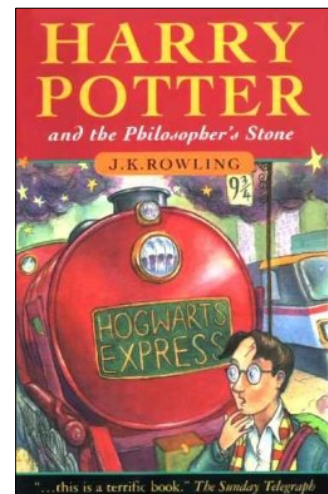
Also, at a certain age children will prefer to read to themselves at bedtime, and poor Dad or Mum just have to live with it.

For me the best example of this came when at age 9 my younger son discov-

ered the Harry Potter books. We were in the U.K. on holiday in 1999, and I discovered the paperback edition of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in Heffer's Bookshop in Cambridge. Now I wasn't sure if my son would like it; by this time he had a mind of his own and, although we were still reading to him at bedtime, there was no predicting whether a particular book would work or not.

This one worked. I remember starting it one night, then continuing it the next night. On the third night I continued, and when I got to a point where I wanted to stop — I was getting tired even if he wasn't — he said, “It's OK, Dad, you can stop. But I think I'll keep reading it.”

He proceeded to inhale the first two books in the series and then, luckily for him, the third story, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, came out in hardcover just before we had to head back to Canada. I don't think I read to him at bedtime much longer, but he was a reader, for life.



## Captain Flint's Trunk — News from around the world

### Getting Ready for the Wooden Boat Festival

By Nikki McClure, Budd Inlet, Olympia WA

My son Finn is in his boat, *Ichi*, with his friends Hatcher and Sophie. Finn watches the bigger sailing ships catching the wind, with their captains who caught the same dream when they were Finn's age of 12. Hatcher is calm at the tiller watching the jellyfish thicken and still the water. Sophie is casting off the mooring. They are all ready to embark on sailing adventures: Finn, the cruiser; Hatcher, the racer; and Sophie, with a bit of both in her.

Finn was given *Ichi* by Erik, his sailing instructor. Erik found the boat in disrepair while he was a student at Sound School in Connecticut. *Ichi* was named *Number One* back then and was the first boat built at the maritime high school. Erik fixed her up and sailed around the Thimble Islands. He brought her to Olympia, WA and sailed a few times in the Salish Sea until his dreaming led to a bigger boat,

*Kirin*, a Lyle Hess-designed cutter in need of a rebuild. So *Number One* was tarped over.

*Kirin* needed a new stem. My husband, Jay T, offered Erik the use of his shop and his opinions and experience. Through this friendship and late shop nights, Erik asked if he could give Finn a boat, *Number One*. Finn was delighted and so was I. I always told him someone would give him a boat someday. But a free boat always needs work. The 16' New Haven Oyster Sharpie needed a new stem, and caulking, and varnish, and paint. The boat was small enough that Finn could understand and do the work with some help from Jay T. Finn rechristened the boat *Ichi* (One in Japanese) in reference to her new home in the Pacific. Finn sails *Ichi* in Budd Inlet. He and Hatcher have slept aboard as the tide crept out, with *Ichi* laying on the mud at the 4 am low tide and rising off

again by waking. The two friends now dream of longer summer journeys. There are doodles and drawings of boat plans and stacks of old *WoodenBoat* magazines as evidence that the dream has caught hold. Someday Finn will be a captain of one of those bigger boats that he now watches with a critical and appreciative eye for their lines.

The boats sailing in the distance are *The Adventuress*, *Nevermore*, and *Bucephalus*.

The Wooden Boat festival has been held every year in Port Townsend, Washington since 1978. This year's event takes place from September 8 through 10. Find out more at Wooden Boat festival:

<http://nwmaritime.org/wooden-boat-festival/>



All were chosen for their stories of adventure and dreaming. *The Adventuress* I chose because she's *The Adventuress*, and for her incarnations of exploration and function and now inspiration and advocacy. She inspires new sailors every day and creates opportunities to examine our homes from the waterways. We live on the edge of the wilderness that is the Salish Sea. When I was a fifth grader, I went out on the *Snow Goose* out of Seattle. They projected live plankton on the wall. It changed my life. I see *The Adventuress* making this possible with the added thrill of hoisting the



Getting ready

mainsail and sailing into the quiet.

*Nevermore* is a fifty-three foot schooner built out of local timber and driftwood in the 80's on Quadra Island, BC. Billy Wolf, dreaming of boats since he was Finn's age, spied the gleaming glory of her bright work hull and said, "That's my boat". He walked up to her and saw a tiny For Sale sign in the window. She was his boat. Billy has meticulously kept her bright and strong. He has been sailing her North from Port Townsend for many summers. My family has been lucky enough to be crew for some expeditions. *Nevermore* is a living being to me. I always spend some time alone talking to her before embarking and when we return, I thank her for keeping us safe and dry. She kindles the dreaming in me of star-filled anchorages and orcas breathing in the fog. I am like Finn as I look out from my home and see sailboats heading "out". I want to follow them up the waterways to the bigger world of quietude and wildness.

*Bucephalus* was built by Ralph Stanley in Maine for a fifteen-year-old sailor, Alex. When Finn was littler, Jay T found a book *The Boatbuilder*. The book is about the building of *Bucephalus*, a Stanley 19. Finn would pour over the photos of the boatbuilding process. We became friends with Alex's sister and discovered that her brother's boat was the boat in the

book. Alex was living in Olympia as was *Bucephalus*, but we hadn't met yet. Then one day as Finn and Jay T were tying up *Ichi*, a boat kept sailing straight towards us from across the bay. The boat sailed a tight figure eight through moored boats and raft. We hailed "*Bucephalus* Ahoy!" A voice from the boat said, "Who are you?" We paddled out and climbed aboard. We had a very proper introduction, and then we were off across the bay. Only on the other side, when I hoped we could sail until dark, did I remember that dinner was in the oven. Since

that meeting, Alex has dropped by to share knowledge and stories. Alex just restored *Bucephalus* after 30 years of sailing her. His relationship to the boat is rare and tangible. He grew up with her and his sailing of her is intuitive. There is a photo in the book of Alex sailing *Bucephalus* for the first time. There is a look in his eyes as he watches the sails that I see in Finn's eyes aboard *Ichi*, the concentrated knowing of tiller and trim, water and wind, the adoration of craft and vessel, of wood and sail: the dream.



## Useful Links

**The Arthur Ransome Society (TARS) website:** <http://www.arthur-ransome.org.uk>

**All Things Ransome, a website devoted to keeping articles, artwork, and anything related to Ransome:** <http://www.allthingsransome.net>

**The Arthur Ransome Wiki, an encyclopedia on Ransome, his life and works:** [http://arthur-ransome.wikia.com/wiki/Arthur\\_Ransome\\_Wiki](http://arthur-ransome.wikia.com/wiki/Arthur_Ransome_Wiki)

## The Sea Bear's Galley — Eating with the Swallows and Amazons

### Swallows, Amazons and Pemmican

By Ian Sacré

In many of Arthur Ransome's Swallows and Amazons series, the expedition cooks, Susan and Peggy, used what they called "pemmican" for the creation of many of the scrumptious meals served around their camp fires or in the galleys of the various craft in which they found themselves. In reality I suspect the secret ingredient they were using was good old fashioned bully beef or corned beef made by Fray Bentos or Hereford. Sold in those strange shaped tins with sloping sides and rounded corners, the tins had an odd sort of key that fitted onto a little tongue of metal — which invariably snapped off if it was turned the wrong way! This left the cook with the dilemma of trying to open the tin with a conventional tin opener if he or she happened to have one in their kit.

Hereford corned beef is potent stuff and not for the faint of heart. One 55-gram slice (about 2 ounces) has 130 calories, hideous amounts of various kinds of fat, enough cholesterol to cause your doctor to go into angry convulsions and enough salt to last you a week and that is in just one miserable slice! But the beauty of such fare is that it can be doctored. Add fried onions, mix it with lots of mashed potatoes, a tin of peas and carrots if you have one, a little pepper and tip the whole mess into a frying pan and brown and you have a meal fit for hungry explorers!

But what was or is real pemmican? Pemmican is a concentrated nutritional food and was invented by the North American Plains Indians. It

was originally made in the summer months from lean dried buffalo meat and rendered fat as a way to preserve and store the meat for use when travelling and during the winter months.



When explorers and fur traders discovered the product it became highly sought after, and the Hudson's Bay Company used to purchase tons of the stuff from the First Nation peoples for use by their voyageurs. The basic unit of trade was an animal hide filled with about 90 pounds of pemmican which, when sewn closed, had its seams sealed with pure rendered fat. As long as it was kept away from heat, damp and direct sunlight it would last for years.

It seems there were two types of pemmican. One version consisted of 50 percent dried meat and 50 percent rendered fat mixed together. The other mixture was similar but consisted of 50 percent rendered fat, 45 percent dried meat and 5 percent dried fruit or berries, all percentages by weight. It should be born in mind that real pemmican is not an uncooked raw food.

Several years ago I thought I would have a go at making pemmican. Not

having a buffalo herd close by I had to settle for beef, so I bought hamburger. This was spread on a cookie sheet and popped in the oven at the lowest possible temperature to dry, not to cook. A dehydrator would have been perfect but I did not have one. I also went to the local butcher and was given several pounds of beef fat which I cut up into small pieces and put in a large frying pan to render into pure beef lard.

Having totally stunk up my kitchen I finally had a tray of dried beef and a bowl of pure beef fat. Progress! I then thought I'd apply a little modern technology and put the dried, crisp beef into my blender to turn it into powder. The blender did the trick, though I doubt if it will ever be the same again! Finally I had reach the last step, which was to combine the two. Measuring the beef and the fat carefully, with the precision of a chemist, I combined the equal amounts and mixed the two together.

There was no spontaneous reaction so I was obviously on the right track!

The resulting mixture looked rather unappetising but seemed to have worked, and I am certain if I were a voyageur used to paddling a heavily laden canoe fifty or more miles a day in all weathers from daylight to dark I would find the goop very filling indeed. But until a voyageur's job is offered to me I think I shall stick with bully beef and just call it pemmican. Susan and Peggy obviously had the same idea!



## Pieces of Eight — The Junior Pages



### Arthur Ransome's Birthday Corroboree

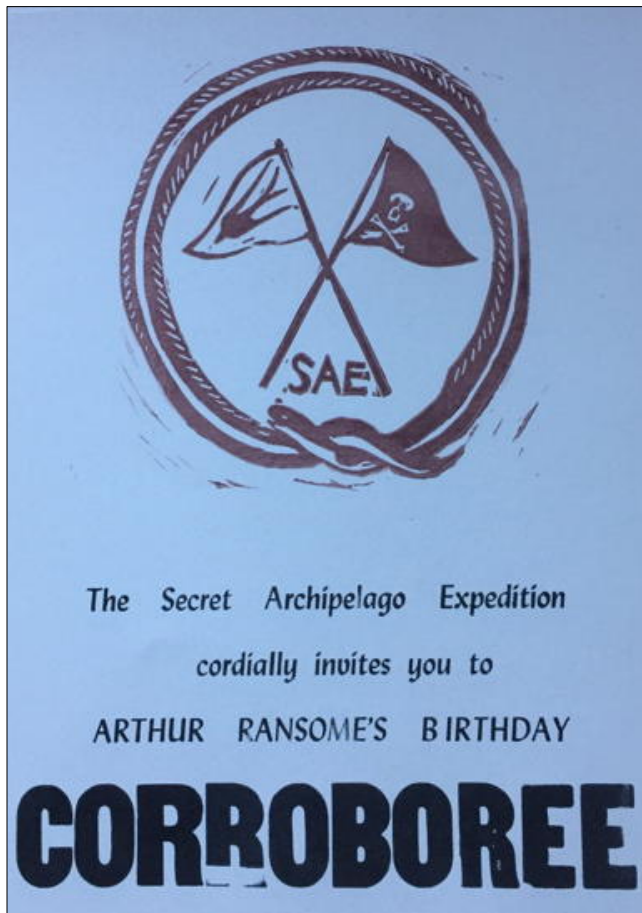
By Nikki McClure

We had another successful birthday party for Arthur Ransome

30 people showed up, 14 of them kids, prepared for mud, darkness, and human sacrifice. After Roger's chocolate box had been properly raided, the kids ran about snatching cream buns (little did they know) from the picnic table. And then, what was that drifting in the water? A bottle? WITH A MESSAGE IN IT!

Inside the bottle was a letter written by Robert F. Scott entrusting the find-

er with a part of a map and a clue to find the rest of the map. The map had been hidden across time by adventurers and explorers and would lead to the most dear of treasures. The kids quickly took off to find the next clue, which was tucked in basket of apples and oranges that Scott's explorers had cached under a big maple tree.



Clues were found by Leif Ericson (in the sauna) and Nellie Bly (in the mailbox with a dated Korean stamp and a piece of the map missing due to monkey chewing). Don Quixote's clue was found at a windmill (hand pump). Eventually they found a treasure chest hidden deep in the woods. All hands were needed to lug it back. It was padlocked. The key was to be found in Homer. In the library *The Odyssey* was brought down and in it a key was found. When the treasure was opened there were wrapped presents for

each child, books from the explorers matched to the kids' ages and interests. And there were pirate flags too, of course, even for the grown ups.

After a hearty dinner with grog, candles, three chocolate cakes and three million cheers, it was time for the human sacrifice!

Boone, as the youngest member of the crew, bravely accepted the role. He did have to hold a toy helicopter to make him feel calmer. He was tied to a stake and the kids danced around him with torches (the fire kind!) singing "Happy Birthday". The cream buns paid off.

Now a summer party is being planned.



## Try a LitWits Kit

Activities and ideas for readers of *Swallows and Amazons*

By Simon Horn

LitWits is a duo of sisters from Santa Cruz who run literature-based workshops for kids aged between 7 and 13 based on the classics of children's literature, such as *The Secret Garden*, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, *The Railway Children* and, of course, *Swallows and Amazons*. After they have held a given workshop half a dozen times, they transform it into a PDF-format kit that those of us who do not live in southern California can purchase. Although the kits are aimed at teachers and home-schoolers, the rest of us may find them an entertaining way to interest our children in books.

I bought the *Swallows and Amazons* kit to see what it was like. The opening paragraph makes LitWits philosophy clear:

**“You want your kids to really love *Swallows and Amazons*.** Maybe you loved the book yourself, and you want to pass its joys along to them. You probably want them to love all great books – well-written books that can pull them into another world, turn time upside down, and gobble up whole Sunday afternoons. Books that lead to incidental learning about history, geography, math, science, people and character. Books that will stay with your kids for the rest of their lives.

We do too! That's why we founded LitWits.”

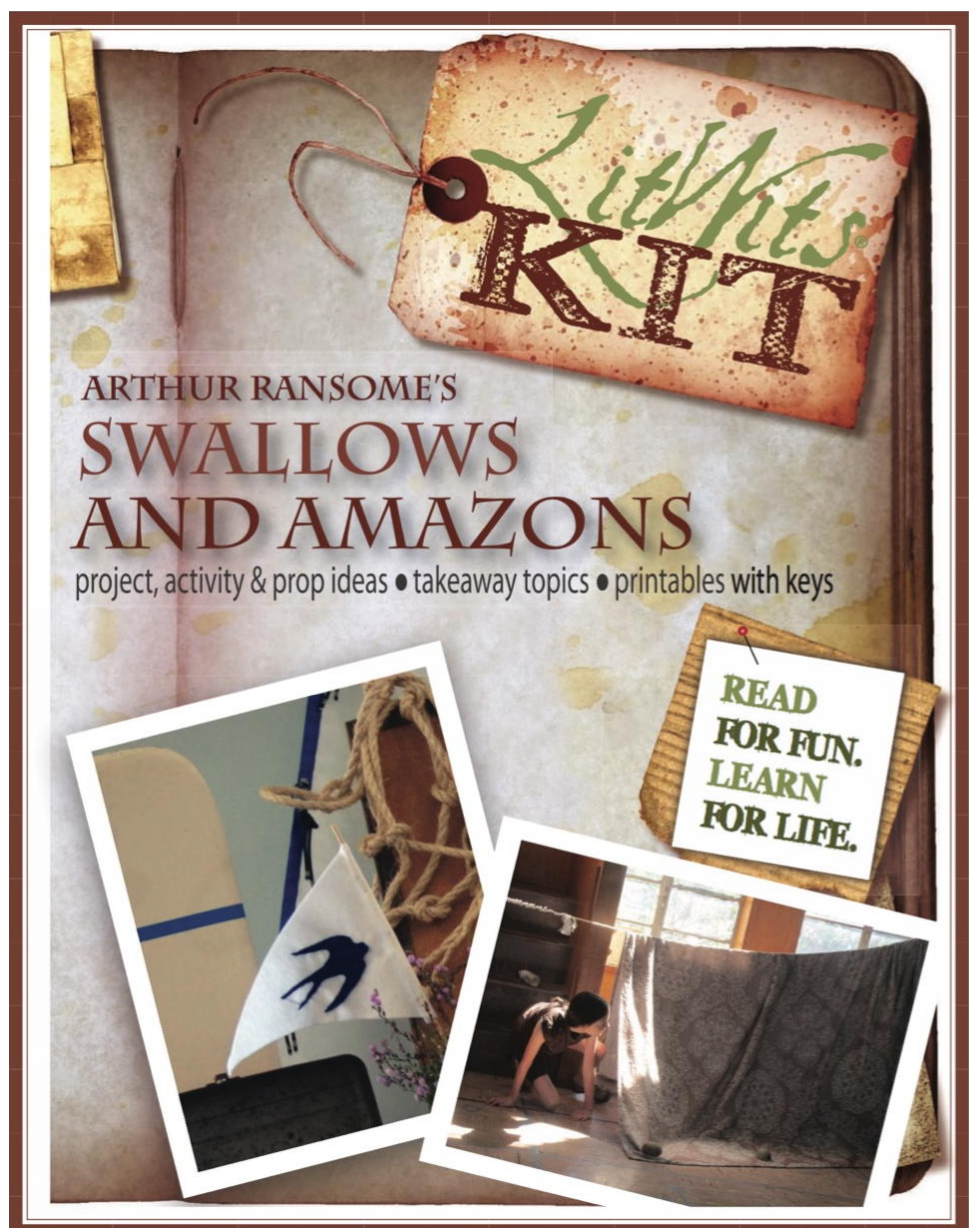
The kit includes instructions and tips on how to use it, and a whole series of suggestions and exercises. They make

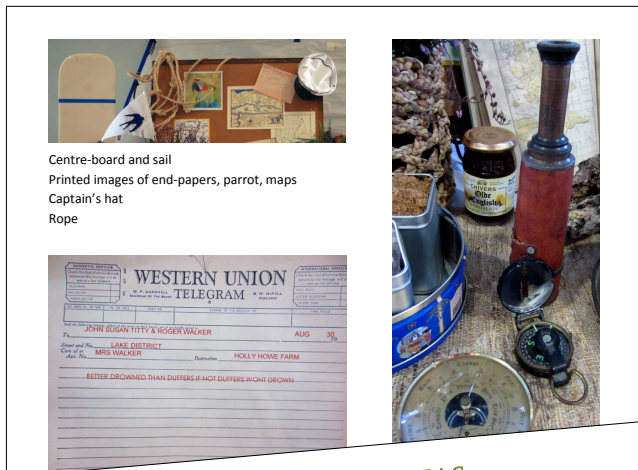
a lot of use of what they call “sensory props”: physical objects that help to bring the story to life. The *Swallows and Amazons* kit suggests everything from British food treats to tins of sardines to a re-creation of Daddy's telegram in Chapter 1.

Proposed exercises cover writing and

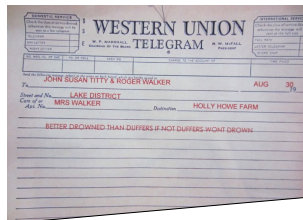
narrative, nautical vocabulary, geography and building a paper Swallow.

For anyone interested, the *Swallows and Amazons* LitWits kit, along with kits for 39 other children's classics can be bought in PDF format for \$18 each from the LitWits website: <https://litwits.com>





Centre-board and sail  
Printed images of end-papers, parrot, maps  
Captain's hat  
Rope



## SENSORY PROP SUGGESTIONS

These straight-from-the-story props were on-hand, borrowed, made, or found at thrift and discount stores. Some are easier to find or create than others – don't feel your collection has to be this complete! Choose the props that you think will have the most appeal to your kids and relevance to your goals.

## ACTIVITY IDEAS

We suggest making a craft model ahead of time, so it's easier to demonstrate and explain to the children. It's also a good time to make any preparations that will save time later. These crafts are self-explanatory, and templates are included as noted.

Make a **Swallow flag** from felt and a dowel. (See page 11 for template.)

Color and title a copy of the book's 1931 endpapers to create an **artistic cover** for a handouts folder. (Search online for endpaper images.)

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## STORYLINES

The Narrative Arc

The plot is what happens in the story, and those things happen in a certain order to keep readers interested and entertained. That order, with its rising, cresting, and dropping levels of excitement, is called the **narrative arc**. We'll talk about the different points on the arc and how they help the story move along.

Now think of some of the important scenes in *Swallows and Amazons*, using our props as reminders. Choose one word to describe each scene, and write it where it belongs on the narrative arc.

Exposition: \_\_\_\_\_

Conflict: \_\_\_\_\_

Rising Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Climax: \_\_\_\_\_

Resolution: \_\_\_\_\_

Falling Action: \_\_\_\_\_

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